

Message Text

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CORRECTED COPY (PARA 2)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, KS, JA

SUBJECT: JAPANESE REACTIONS TO KIM TAE CHUNG CASE

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

REF: TOKYO 10380

SUMMARY: THOUGH ON HORNS OF DILEMMA BETWEEN MAINTAINING GOOD RELATIONS WITH ROKG AND RESPONDING TO DOMESTIC POLITICAL PRESSURES HIGHLY CRITICAL OF ROKG HANDLING OF KIM CASE, GOJ WILL WORK TO PRESERVE GOOD RELATIONS, WILL NOT WAVER ON KOREAN QUESTION AT UNGA, BUT WILL PROBABLY POSTPONE ROK-GOJ MINISTERIAL MEETINGS UNTIL LATE OCTOBER AT EARLIEST. GOJ IS NOW SEEKING ROK UNDERSTANDING FOR POSTPONEMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING WEEK SINCE KIM TAE CHUNG'S REAPPEARANCE IN SEOUL, MISGIVINGS OF JAPANESE GOVERNMENT AND MEDIA HAVE INCREASED considerably, in reaction to continuing obscurity surrounding CONFIDENTIAL

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MOST ASPECTS OF EPISODE, SPECIFICALLY IDENTITY OF CULPRITS, AND TO ROKG REFUSAL TO COOPERATE IN WAYS REQUESTED BY JAPANESE. MEDIA, WHICH EMBASSY BELIEVES ARE REFLECTING AS WELL AS LEADING GENUINELY WIDE-SPREAD INTEREST, CONTINUE TO GIVE MAJOR PLAY TO

EVERY NEW DEVELOPMENT AND HYPOTHESIS. AS REPORTED IN DAILY USIS CURRENT REACTION SUMMARIES, EDITORIAL REACTION HAS BEEN INCREASINGLY CRITICAL OF ROKG POSTURE AND HAS BEGUN TO CALL FOR REASSESSMENT OF ROK-GOJ RELATIONS. ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES, GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC ATTITUDES EVOLVED AS FOLLOWS.

2. AS LATE AS AUG 16, FONMIN OHIRA WAS TELLING JOURNALISTS THAT HE HOPED FOR POSITIVE ACTION BY ROKG AND THAT THERE WAS NO POSSIBILITY THAT BILATERAL MINISTERIAL MEETINGS SCHEDULED FOR SEPT 7-8 WOULD BE POSTPONED BECAUSE TO DO SO COULD CREATE EVEN MORE SERIOUS PROBLEMS BETWEEN JAPAN AND SOUTH KOREA. HOWEVER, ON AUG 17 PRIMIN KIM CALLED IN AMB. USHIROKU TO AGAIN DENY ANY ROKG RESPONSIBILITY FOR KIDNAPPING, ARGUING THAT IT WAS COMPLETELY UNREASONABLE TO SUPPOSE THAT ROKG HAD MORE TO GAIN THAN LOSE BY SUCH ACT. PRIMIN KIM ALSO, IN RESPONSE TO REPEATED GOJ REQUESTS FOR ROKG GOOD OFFICES IN RETURNING KIM TO JAPAN, DEFINITIVELY DECLINED ON GROUNDS THAT ROKG REQUIRED KIM'S PRESENCE FOR ITS OWN INVESTIGATION, RESULTS OF WHICH WOULD HOWEVER BE MADE AVAILABLE TO GOJ. KIM'S LETTERS TO PRIMIN TANAKA AND FONMIN OHIRA, DELIVERED AUG 18, DISPELLED REMNANTS OF GOJ HOPES FOR DESIRED GOKRG COOPERATION SINCE THEY WENT NO FURTHER THAN APOLOGIZING FOR FACT THAT KOREAN CITIZENS HAD CAUSED TROUBLE FOR GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE OF JAPAN. COMMENTING ON THIS POINT, FONOFF SOURCE SAID IT IS NOT CLEAR IF ROKG MIGHT RELEASE KIM AT SOME TIME IN FUTURE, BUT GOJ BELIEVES IT UNLIKELY AND JAPANESE POLICE ARE THEREFORE CONSIDERING SENDING INTERROGATOR TO SEOUL.

3. ROKG DECISION NOT TO PERMIT KIM TO RETURN TO JAPAN AT THIS TIME APPARENTLY TIPPED BALANCE OF OPINION WITHIN FONOFF IN FAVOR OF THOSE WHO ARGUED THAT DOMESTIC REACTIONS (SEE BELOW) WOULD NOT COUNTENANCE HOLDING MINISTERIAL MEETINGS AS SCHEDULED. REPORTEDLY, OHIRA WAS PREPARED TO TAKE THIS LINE AT REGULAR CABINET MEETING ON AUG 21 BUT IN FACT DECISION WAS POSTPONED UNTIL NEXT CABINET MEETING SCHEDULED FOR AUG 25. REASON FOR DELAY, AS FONOFF HAS TOLD US IN STRICTEST CONFIDENCE, IS THAT GOJ DECIDED ROKG MUST FIRST BE CONSULTED ON POSTPONE-
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MENT. AS OF AUG 21, THEREFORE, GOJ WAS IN PROCESS OF EXPLAINING TO ROKG DIFFICULTIES THAT WOULD ARISE IN JAPAN IF MEETING WERE HELD AS SCHEDULED, AND ASKING ROKG ACQUIESCE IN POST-ONEMENT. TO COVER HIATUS, OHIRA MET WITH PRESS AFTER AUG 21 CABINET MEETING AND EXPLAINED THAT WHILE HE DID NOT NECESSARILY EXPECT ANY DEVELOPMENT BEFORE AUG 25 WHICH WOULD MAKE CABINET DECISION EASIER, HE WISHED TO QTE STUDY FOREIGN REACTIONS UNQTE. HE ADDED THAT EVEN IF MINISTERIAL MEETING COMES OFF ON SCHEDULE, IT WOULD BE QTE DIFFERENT UNQTE FROM WHAT IT WOULD HAVE BEEN IF KIM EPISODE HAD NOT OCCURRED.

4. AT THIS STAGE, GOJ FINDS ITSELF IN VERY DIFFICULT POSITION. ON ONE HAND, AS FONOFF ASSURED US, GOJ WISHES TO PRESERVE GOOD

RELATIONS WITH ROK, WHICH CAME ABOUT ONLY AS RESULT OF MANY YEARS HARD WORK. BASIC GOJ POLICY TOWARD ROK WILL THEREFORE REMAIN UNCHANGED, INCLUDING ITS POSITION ON KOREAN QUESTION AT UNGA. ON OTHER HAND, GOVERNMENT FACES DOMESTIC CRITICISM WHICH CANNOT BE IGNORED. QUITE APART FROM MEDIA AND OPPOSITION PARTIES, LDP LIBERALS LED BY UTSUNOMIYA HAVE BEEN OUTSPOKENLY CRITICAL OF ROKG FOR ITS LACK OF COOPERATION AND HAVE DEMANDED THAT GOJ ASK ROKG TO RELEASE KIM AS POLITICAL REFUGEE, AN UNDERTAKING WHICH GOJ WOULD FIND VERY DIFFICULT. TO COMPOUND DIFFICULTIES, GOVERNMENT, WHICH HAS ONLY JUST SUCCEEDED IN GETTING DIET BACK INTO SESSION ON AUG 23 AFTER THREE-WEEK OPPOSITION BOYCOTT DUE TO OTHER FACTORS, WILL STILL NOT BE ABLE TO MOVE AHEAD ON URGENT LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM OUT OF NECESSITY TO RESPOND TO BOTH LDP AND OPPOSITION INTERPELLATIONS ON KIM CASE. THESE WILL BE EVEN MORE DRAWN OUT IF CRITICS' IRE IS FUELED BY APPARENT GOJ DESIRE TO PAPER OVER ISSUE, AS WOULD SEEM TO BE CASE IF MINISTERIAL MEETINGS WERE HELD ON SCHEDULE IN ATMOSPHERE OF BUSINESS AS USUAL. MOREOVER, GOJ FEARS THAT IF DOMESTIC SITUATION GETS OUT OF HAND, CONSEQUENCES COULD BE EVEN MORE FAR REACHING, GOING TO VERY HEART OF GOJ POLICY TOWARD KOREAN PENINSULA AND REVISION OF CURRENT STRONG TILT IN FAVOR OF ROK OVER DPRK. PARTLY IN HOPE OF GETTING GREATER COOPERATION FROM ROKG, VICE MIN HOGEN HAS REPEATEDLY WARNED AMB LEE OF THESE CONSEQUENCES WHICH IM CASE COULD HAVE FOR GOJ-ROK RELATIONS.

5. DEPTH OF GOJ'S INDECISION OVER KIM CASE HAS BEEN REVEALED TO EMBASSY FROM SEVERAL SOURCES. IN BRIEF CONVERSATION CONFIDENTIAL

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WITH CHARGE, DEP VICE MIN TOGO DECLINED TO EXPRESS ANY FIRM VIEW OF WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE OR WHAT GOJ MIGHT DO, BUT HE IMPLIED MINISTERIAL MEETINGS WOULD HAVE TO BE POSTPONED UNTIL LATE OCTOBER AT EARLIEST. OTHER FONOFF SOURCES HAVE BEEN EXPLICIT IN SUSPECTING ROK CIA, BUT HAVE ADMITTED THAT WHEN ANY GOJ OFFICIAL IMPLIED THIS TO ROK, RESPONSE HAS BEEN QUICK AND COLD CHALLENGE TO COME UP WITH PROOF. DESPITE ROK FIRMNESS ON THIS POINT, AND GOJ ANXIETY FOR ANY GESTURE OF COOPERATION FROM ROKG WHICH COULD BE USED FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL PURPOSES GOJ HAS NO DESIRE TO ACCEPT SYNTHETIC ARTICLE WHICH COULD BE TIME BOMB IF ROK CIA FINALLY DOES EMERGE AS CULPRIT.

6. EMBASSY SEES SOME HINT OF EXPLANATION FOR APPARENT DEPTH AND PERVERSIVENESS OF JAPANESE CONCERN IN FONOFF'S COMPARISON WITH ABDUCTION OF KOREAN STUDENTS FROM WEST GERMANY. IN THAT INSTANCE, (A) ROKG ITSELF WAS CLEARLY RESPONSIBLE, AND (B) FRG COULD TAKE FIRM MEASURE AND THEREAFTER CONTENT ITSELF WITH NO MORE THAN QTE CORRECT UNQTE RELATIONS WITH ROK. IN THIS INSTANCE, HOWEVER, GOJ IS NOT CERTAIN WHO IS GUILTY, AND LONG HISTORY AND INVOLVEMENT OF JAPAN WITH KOREA MAKE UNACCEPTABLE ANYTHING LESS THAN CLOSE AND FRIENDLY RELATIONS. PUT ANOTHER WAY, MANY SOURCES HAVE TOLD US THAT SIMILAR EPISODE

INVOLVING, FOR EXAMPLE, INDONESIAN NATIONAL WOULD AROUSE NO
SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC OR POLITICAL REACTION.

7. ON ASPECTS OF GREATEST INTEREST TO USG, EMBASSY BELIEVES
GOJ WILL MAINTAIN FRIENDLY AND COOPERATIVE POLICY TOWARD ROK,
AND WILL NOT WAVER WITH RESPECT TO KOREAN QUESTION AT UNGA.
INCIDENTALLY, CURRENT FONOFF ASSESSMENT IS THAT KIM CASE WILL
HAVE ONLY MARGINAL EFFECT, IF THAT, ON VOTING SITUATION AT
28TH UNGA.

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